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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Come to us now, gracious God, as we seek Your presence. Shine Your light into the hearts of our lawmakers, empowering them to work for Your honor and glory. Lord, give them the wisdom to strive for integrity in every area of their lives, staying true to You regardless of the consequences. Remind them that because of You they are never alone. Let their lives be examples of people who are passionate about loving You.

We pray in Your faithful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 8, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. LUJÁN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, at the beginning of December, I said the Senate had a lot of hard work to do in order to address several critical priorities before the end of the year.

When the month began, America knew we had to avoid a government shutdown; we had to approve our annual Defense bill; we had to preserve the full faith and credit of the United States; take action on Build Back Better before Christmas, as well as deal with voting rights.

It is now December 8, and the Senate is making very good progress on all of these priorities. It was a big, big agenda, and we are clearly not through with it, but we are making good progress. There is clearly light at the end of the tunnel on the debt ceiling and the Defense bill based on the agreement Leader McConnell and I came to and the House's action last night. Let me go over those details.

Last night, the House of Representatives sent us two important pieces of legislation. One of them is a compromise version of our annual Defense bill, which I expect will earn bipartisan support in this Chamber in the coming days.

I want to thank my colleagues, especially Senator REED, Ranking Member INHOFE, and all my colleagues, who worked to shape this legislation to help us make sure we pass a bipartisan Defense bill this year, as we have done for decades.

The second bill they sent us will enable the Chamber to swiftly address the debt limit, sparing our country from the calamity—and a calamity it would have been—of a first-ever default on our national debt. This fast-tracked process was included in a bill that will also provide critical protections for Medicare funding, preventing slashes in that very important funding to so many seniors, and waive the pay-go rule to avoid harmful cuts.

Last night, I took the first procedural step to advance this legislation, setting up a cloture vote to take place as soon as Thursday. Once our proposal is approved by the Senate, we will be able to address the debt limit in this Chamber with a simple majority vote, which is exactly what Democrats have been seeking for months and what I have been asking for at this podium time after time, after time.

I want to thank the Republican leader for his help in working with us to find a responsible path that avoids partisan brinksmanship.

Democrats have always said that the Senate should be able to raise the debt limit without resorting to a convoluted, lengthy, and risky reconciliation process, and under our plan, we won't have to do that.

Democrats have also said repeatedly that the responsible thing to do is to raise the debt ceiling. Both Democrats and Republicans voted for the spending increase. We have said repeatedly that

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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